

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Slow & Steady



RABBI
ARYEH
PRIDONOFF

The blessings I see in my job are pretty incredible, and numerous. Not only are two of our students learning in *yeshiva* and seminary this year, but we also get to see the prospects. Our students are gems, but sometimes we see a glint of something heretofore unseen. Campus work has become challenging in the days of Corona. Like many things. How to engage students is a daily battle. So far this year we have had a few great, socially distanced events, and although we miss hosting for Shabbos, we are getting used to our "new normal." This week, I had two seemingly unrelated conversations with students. After further examination, however, I realized it was almost like I was having one conversation with two people.

One student mentioned to me a small *kabbalah* he took on during the ten days of *teshuva*. This struck me as odd, as he is not very religiously observant. To give you an idea, when I asked him, "what are you doing for Rosh Hashana?" He replied, "probably nothing." He told me today that his rabbi back in Cleveland (at JFX for those familiar with the Cleveland *kiruv* scene) said, "Even if you are not so *religious*, you can do something small, every day. Even just saying the *Shema* daily is significant." I was floored. He understands the value of personal growth, and he wants more. Something he heard so many years ago still makes an impact.

The next student I spoke with comes from a conservative Jewish background. He values being Jewish and considers that he has a strong background. He shared with me his familiarity of the story of Rabbi Akiva and the rock. Rabbi Akiva noticed a hole straight through the center of a rock. Water dripped slowly, but steadily in the same place, time and time again. Eventually the rock developed a hole. "This was the story of Rav Noach and Aish HaTorah," I said to

him. Rabbi Akiva surmised, "If water which is soft can penetrate rock, which is hard, how much more so can Torah which is likened to fire, penetrate my heart which is flesh."

Many of us approach Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur with "new year's resolutions." This is a mistake. How many of us can really say we did all that we promised ourselves we would do? The Gemara in *Sukkah*, and elsewhere, says "If you grab too much, you won't have anything. If you grab something small, you have something." My rebbeim in *yeshiva* said the same thing about *kabbalos*. It shouldn't be so easy that it is meaningless, but it should not be too hard. Take on something easy, that you know you can do. Those are the *kabbalos* that stick.

I see this with my students. One student is "not so religious" according to his description, but he has taken on one of the greatest *kabbalos* of all! He accepts Hashem's yoke daily! Talk about a slow drip!

Rav Avigdor Miller says, "If you want to be an even greater person, spend five minutes and think about what you're going to do for the coming year." Just five minutes can make the difference between an average Yom Kippur, and an incredible Yom Kippur. In the end, it's the consistency that matters. 🕒



THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Reuven bought a beautiful, expensive *esrog* from the *esrog* merchant, but it was still very green. He asked the merchant how he could help ripen it so it can turn yellow. The merchant answered that he should put it in the microwave for five minutes. Understandably, the merchant was joking, but Reuven, who wasn't so familiar with a microwave, thought it may do the trick.

Reuven went to a neighbor and asked him to put the *esrog* in the microwave for five minutes. The neighbor did so, and five minutes later, the *esrog* emerged blackened and charred. Reuven now claims that the merchant should return the money he spent on the *esrog* because he relied on the merchant's advice and, in turn, essentially burned his *esrog*.

Q Does Reuven's claim hold water?

A The merchant did nothing but advise him, and at worst he would be considered damaging *b'grama*, indirectly, and he would only be liable in Heavenly court, but would be exempt from paying him (see *Rema C.M. 386:3*). Perhaps in our scenario, the merchant would not even be culpable by Heavenly court because he had no intent to damage.

However, the Talmud (*Bava Kama 100a*) and *Shulchan Aruch* (*ibid*, 306:6; see also commentaries there) rule that

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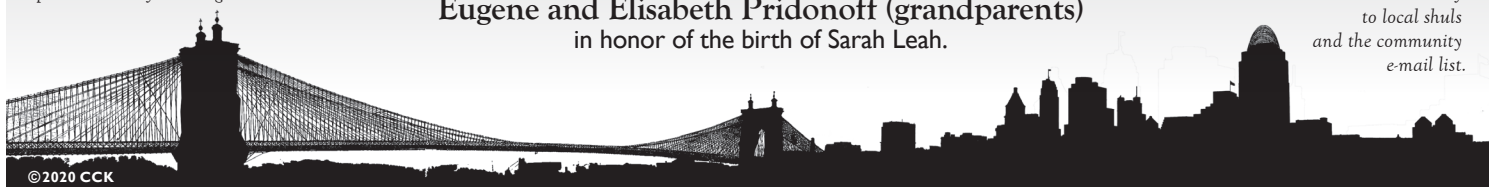
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Eugene and Elisabeth Pridonoff (grandparents)
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is distributed weekly
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THE RABBI WAS ASKED

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one who incurs a loss by following one's mistaken advice may obligate the advisor to pay if he had paid the advisor for his advice. Here too, Reuven paid for the *esrog*, so maybe he can claim his loss from the merchant. But we may counter again that since most people know what a microwave is, and they would know that his suggestion wasn't serious, the merchant should then be exempt, for there was no reason at all for him to assume that Reuven would have it put in a microwave. (Meiri, beg. of chap. 6 B.K. rules that one who indirectly damages without intent is exempt even from Heavenly court).

Perhaps, though, we can obligate Reuven's neighbor to pay for the loss of the *esrog*, because how could he be so foolish to put the *esrog* in the microwave for five minutes? He clearly knows the power of his microwave! As the Talmud (*Bava Kama* 27a) states: One who tells his friend to rip his clothes or break his possessions and his friend does so, the friend is liable to pay for the damage he caused.

There is room to debate though, if Reuven gave the *esrog* to one who is not familiar with *mitzvos*, for although he knows what a microwave can do, he does not know what an *esrog* is nor its significance. 🤖

A SHINING EXAMPLE

When the city of Koenigsburg was looking for a new rabbi, they decided to offer the position to a certain scholar who served as rabbi in a nearby town. The Rabbi considered the matter together with his wife. The position of Rabbi of Koenigsburg would be a big step up, and not only in salary for the young rabbi. The *yeshiva* in Koenigsburg was much larger and, instead of teaching Torah to twenty students as he did in his town, he would be teaching close to two hundred. After much careful consideration they accepted the offer. The delegation from Koenigsburg were delighted and would be traveling back with the news after the upcoming Shabbos.

That Thursday the Rebbetzin began her weekly chore of washing the *yeshiva* students' clothing. As she scrubbed, she thought about this contribution that she, in her little town, was able to make towards taking care of the young men whose lives were devoted to Hashem and His Torah. Surely, she thought to herself, in a big place like Koenigsburg they would never let the esteemed



The Kollel will be on recess from 9/28 until 10/14

A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Who is known by his original name in the *parasha* and why?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🤖

Rebbetzin do something so demeaning as washing clothes for the boys. That meant that this might be of the last times that she would have the opportunity to help take care of the boys! Tears began to well in her eyes. She could not give this up! She wanted to be personally involved in taking care of the *yeshiva* students! She went home and told her husband, who heard her out and gave the messengers from Koenigsburg their final answer: They would not be coming. 🤖



BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

Sunday "Blue" Laws were created to enforce the observance of Sunday as a day of rest for Christians, and, depending on geographic location, restricted things like laughing or talking loudly, walking anywhere other than services, kissing your children, engaging in all forms of commerce, and—its most significant holdover—the sale of alcohol. These laws, which were brought by the first settlers in America to their respective settlements, would be an unmitigated nuisance for Shabbos-observant Jews through the mid-twentieth century in many places. The main problem was that Jews who observed Shabbos would close their businesses on Saturday, and would be forced to keep their businesses closed for a second day of their work week. There are many cases of Jews "caught" doing business on Sunday and fined for their transgression, who then argued in court about the constitutionality of the laws, as they were seemingly in contradiction to freedom of religion. The earliest such case was recorded in 1816. In large part, the laws were upheld in court either because they did not force a Jew to work on his holy day or because they were perceived as general laws for the good of society at large. In fact, many big businesses were in favor of these laws, as the thinking went that they would not actually increase their weekly sales by staying open for more hours, and would end up paying wages to employees just to remain open. One decision of a Court of Common Pleas of Hamilton County, Ohio, in 1844 seemed to hold the first promise of hope for Jews. The court decided to overturn a decision of the mayor of Cincinnati, who had fined several Jews, and stated that as long as a person had designated for himself a day of rest, it would be unconstitutional to force Sunday as his day of rest. Interestingly, the desire of professional sports leagues to play games on Sunday would be one of the major reasons for states to ease their Sunday laws (such as the Philadelphia Athletics threatening to leave their city in 1931, unless the Sunday laws were dropped). 🤖

SOURCES: Levine, Dr. Yitzchok. "Jews and the Sunday Laws." *The Jewish Press*. 2007.

Friedenberg, Albert M. "The Jews And the American Sunday Laws." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 11, 1903, pp. 101–115.

Cincinnati Community Kollel

2241 Losantiville Avenue, Cincinnati OH 45237 • 513-631-1118 • kollel@shul.net • cincykollel.org

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